

## The Power of Music

Have you ever noticed how music can transport you to another (better) place? Make you feel happy? Allow you to feel your angst? Get you tapping your toes? Sing along? Just sit a while your car until the song finishes on the radio?

Music has universal appeal for most of us and science demonstrates just how good listening to music can be for us – even if only for 15 minutes a day. When we listen to music our bodies release “feel good” chemicals called dopamine and serotonin. These chemicals are released in your brain and almost immediately can boost your mood (and who doesn’t need a bit of a boost these days?). When we sing to music or even play an instrument, a hormone called oxytocin is released which can alleviate stress and anxiety.

In addition, music gets our bodies moving by a phenomenon called “entrainment.” This means that when we hear a beat and rhythm that we like, it makes us want to get up and move. No doubt, we’ve all experienced that when dancing alone or with a partner, exercising at the gym or cleaning the house. Can you imagine enjoying any of these activities as much without music?

Music therapists guide us with ideas to use music to temper our emotions during this difficult period.

- For meditation, it is best to use music without lyrics. This will allow you to focus on your breath and can help you to lower your blood pressure.
- For anxiety, start listening to music with a faster tempo that matches how you are feeling. Slowly move to music that is a slower tempo and soften the volume as you go along.
- For happy memories, choose music that can take you (back) to a favorite place or time. Allow yourself to stay in that place and take note of the joy you found in those times. (Likewise, be sure to avoid music that is tied to bad memories as it will make you feel worse.)
- For a sense of belonging, sing or play an instrument with others.
- For selecting your genre, create a play list (ask for help from a younger person) looking for music during the time you were 18 – 24 years old. This music is the most robust as it represents pivotal times in life such as new love, graduation, new careers, etc. Check out this website as a quick way to remember top songs from your early years: <http://thenostalgiamachine.com/>
- For routine, incorporate 15 – 20 minutes into your daily schedule each day. Get comfortable and minimize any distractions or disruptions (e.g. shut off your phone, TV, etc.)

We can’t wait until we are all back together again. We hope that you find music that lifts you up and/or soothes your soul. Thank you for the continued care and support you are providing to your loved one.